

Nevada Division of Forestry

News Release



Holiday Wildland Fire Safety Urged; Restrictions May Be Imposed Soon

With changing weather patterns bringing consistently warm, windy days, new and existing vegetation in most areas of the state is rapidly drying out making fire safety in Nevada's wildland areas over the Memorial Day weekend essential, says State Forester Firewarden Steve Robinson. "We're facing the potential of another fire season marked by explosive and rapid spread of wildland fires through the grasses, light vegetation and layers of dead vegetation and debris from previous years. In fact, it's already started. Conditions are actually worse than in 1999 and 2000 when fires devastated the West and Nevada," Robinson says.

The state forester urged a cautious, common sense approach to enjoying Nevada's vast wildland areas. He suggested those planning wildland area recreational activities be sure to check with the federal state or local agency having jurisdiction to determine any special requirements, permits or restrictions that may be in effect. "The warmer weather conditions we are experiencing are rapidly bringing many wildland areas to a burning condition status," Robinson said. Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Supervisor Robert L. Vaught urged visitors to be extra cautious while enjoying the outdoors this weekend. "Go the extra mile to ensure that your campfire is completely out before packing up," said Vaught who also asked that cigarettes be extinguished in ashtrays. Bureau of Land Management Nevada State Director Bob Abbey urged those enjoying the outdoors to "please make fire safety your first priority." Abbey noted "Fuel conditions on the public lands are very dry for this early in the year. We still have plenty of thick, dried-up cheatgrass left over from last year, and it only takes a tiny spark to ignite this fast-burning fuel. Anything that can cause a spark or generate heat can ignite a wildfire, including your vehicle's catalytic converter, a tossed cigarette or welding." Abbey also asked that campfires be extinguished so that ashes are cool to the touch. "We want you to enjoy yourselves outdoors this holiday weekend, but please help us to protect your public lands," he said.

"Using common sense with regards to fire, while enjoying Nevada's natural resources and wildland areas, will help protect those areas for future generations," Robinson said. He noted individuals who negligently or deliberately caused a wildland fire can be held responsible for the cost of fighting fires, and may also be held for criminal prosecution. "However, Nevadans know how to take care of their lands because that's our tradition. Enforcement is a last recourse," Robinson said.

Robinson also said it is time for wildland area residents to immediately implement defensible space measure to minimize the threat of wildland fires to homes. The state forester said homeowners should clear dead and dying vegetation away from homes and other structures to protect them from wildland fires, and help provide a safe area in which firefighters can work to save homes. "Across the nation defensible space has proven to be a deciding factor in the survival of homes in the path of a wildland fire," Robinson said. At a minimum, Robinson said residents should implement the following:

· Brush, weeds, etc., should be removed a minimum of 30 feet from structures to break up the continuity of vegetation that can spread wildland fires.

- Pine needles, leaves and debris should be removed from roofs and rain gutters.
- Spark arrestors should be installed on chimneys.
- Woodpiles should be located a minimum of 30 feet from structures.
- All combustible storage should be removed from under decks, stairs and eaves.
- Tree limbs should be cut back a minimum of 15 feet from chimneys.
- Dead and live tree limbs should be trimmed up from the ground 15-20 feet.
- Obvious accumulations of trash and other debris should be removed.
- Make sure the address is visible/distinguishable from the street or road.

Contact your local fire department for a courtesy exterior home inspection and more information on implementing defensible space measures.

Robinson pointed out that fire season restrictions and closures are possibilities as the fire season progresses. "NDF and our federal partners, the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service, will be conservative in restricting recreational access, but will do what's necessary to protect public safety and the resources," Robinson said.

A free copy of "Wildfire Protection," a booklet describing methods for homeowners and developers to reduce the risk of wildland fires, is available from the Nevada Division of Forestry by calling (775) 684-2500.

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